

COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2002

Attendees:

Art Donoho	Dan Rosenthal	Mike Click
John Foster	Bob Silbernagel	Dawn Folks
Doralyn Genova	Russ Walker	Clint Kinney
Greg Gnesios	Gene Arnesen	Jane Ross
Warren Gore	Sue Benjamin	Lovell Sasser
Joe Keys	Nadja Brozina	

Greetings and Introductions

Warren Gore called the Advisory Council to order at 3:00 p.m.

Clint Kinney, Fruita City Manager, was introduced and spoke briefly to the group. Mr. Kinney expressed his interest in continuing involvement in the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) planning process. There is great potential for partnerships between Fruita and the CCNCA in the future, including working together on visitor services, trails, land acquisition, Loma boat launch, etc.

The City of Fruita has completed its 2020 comprehensive plan, and opportunities are identified in the plan for a mutually beneficial partnership between the city and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). As we complete the CCNCA plan, Fruita would like to maintain close communication throughout the process. One issue Fruita believes to be a high priority is the acquisition and management of 111 acres located in Snooks Bottom. If the BLM were to eventually purchase the land, cost-sharing with Fruita may be possible.

Other joint issues for the City of Fruita and the BLM include:

- Regulation of population density, at the interface, through the transfer of development rights (TDR).
- Riverfront enhancement, working with the Riverfront Commission.
- Collaboration on the Highway 340 Plan currently in development. The plan could incorporate a visitor's center, in coordination with the Museum of Western Colorado and other entities.

Dan Rosenthal remarked that the City of Fruita is especially important in this planning process given its proximity to the CCNCA, especially to the Kokopelli Loops.

Mr. Kinney stated that the City of Fruita would be proud to be considered the “gateway” to the CCNCA.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

River Corridor Working Group:

Russ Walker gave an update on the August 3, 2002, Advisory Council River Corridor field trip. Russ, along with Shaun Deeney, Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), was the only attendee on the trip, but the time spent was productive. BLM’s Jim Cooper, Jane Ross, and Troy Schnurr discussed and clarified camping and wildlife issues and concerns that had been brought up in the Working Groups.

Art Donoho asked who owned the boat launch and was told that CDOW owns the land, but the area is co-managed with the BLM through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Joe Keys wondered what Colorado State Parks’ interest in the corridor would be. State Parks has the responsibility of regulating use on the river.

The River Corridor Working Group has not met this summer.

Rabbit Valley Working Group:

Bob Silbernagel reported on the Rabbit Valley Working Group. At the group’s August meeting, Jim Cooper, BLM Transportation Planner, brought maps of the Rabbit Valley trail system proposals (see attached map). Discussion focused on a proposed trail around the base of Wild Horse Mesa. Some of the concerns about the proposed trail include:

- Trail traverses private property.
- Trail is close to the McDonald Creek Cultural Resource Area.
- Trail was designated for horseback and hiking, i.e., quiet use area.
- Potential for significant cultural sites existing in the area, and a cultural clearance must be completed prior to any trail development.

Greg Gnesios, CCNCA Manager, reiterated that the map depicted only proposals for both the Working Group and Advisory Council’s consideration.

Two trails leading to the river were depicted on the map but do not have much support from the BLM.

Attendees at the September 9 Rabbit Valley meeting will further discuss the proposed trails.

The Advisory Council continued to discuss the trail system proposal. Motorized access to the river should remain open for further discussion. It was stated by an Advisory Council member representing the motorized community that opening a discussion

regarding motorized use on Wild Horse Mesa is not necessary; prohibiting motorized travel has generally been accepted in the community.

Discussion ensued on the accuracy of the Rabbit Valley proposal map. A suggestion was made that Art Donoho and the equestrian riders get together to improve the map's accuracy.

The Class I cultural survey in the National Conservation Area (NCA) has been funded and will begin in fiscal year 2003.

Art Donoho mentioned that the motorized community is considering making an offer on all private land in Rabbit Valley. The group would like to acquire the Joufflas property first, but the owner will not divulge an asking price.

The Advisory Council asked the BLM to provide an update on the BLM Moab field office planning process for the Utah Rims. A document retrieved from the BLM Utah Internet site indicates the Moab field office's desire to develop additional camping in the Bitter Creek area.

Mack Ridge Working Group:

Lovell Sasser updated the Advisory Council on the Mack Ridge Working Group, because Dan Rosenthal and John Foster had not been available for the meetings.

The group generated a list of issues and then proceeded to prioritize that list. Dan mentioned that the mountain bikers might see user conflicts between horses and bicycles. It was mentioned, and hotly disputed, that the biking community was responsible for building the trails. It is true that the mountain biking community is organized and contributes to building and maintaining Mack Ridge trails.

Dawn Folks requested that the BLM provide user numbers for the Mack Ridge area. A BLM representative responded that approximately 86 percent of use involves mountain bikes, 5 percent involves equestrian use, and 9 percent use by others.

The mountain bike community cites safety as an appropriate reason to minimize use conflict between horseback and mountain bike users. The equestrian community points out that the only injury incurred on Mack Ridge was by a biker. If safety is the issue, etiquette education can aid co-existence, and user groups can be helpful in this initiative.

Horseback riding should be considered an historical use in the CCNCA and protected as such to the extent possible. Most trails in the area originated as cow trails, and not by any single user group.

Wilderness Working Group:

Joe Keys provided an update on the Wilderness Working Group, which met last Tuesday, August 6, 2002. Issues currently being discussed include the cherry-stem

road, Rattlesnake Arches, parking, and camping. A field trip is scheduled for August 20, 2002. The group has agreed that parking needs to be addressed for those accessing the Arches. The area is a day-use area, but some have expressed a desire for overnight camping.

The group has drafted recommendations for BS Road, the newly acquired Aubert and Gore parcels, the Mee trailhead, levels of maintenance, permits, and group size (probably small—around 12). The Wilderness recommendations will be forthcoming.

Discussion turned to “roads” in the Wilderness. Two routes provide access to the river and are very important to permittees in the Wilderness; access in the Wilderness is regulated by grazing agreements. Some in the Advisory Council would like to see the Wilderness Working Group look at roads and determine if there are any candidates for rehabilitation.

Catherine Robertson, BLM Grand Junction Field Manager, would like to see the Working Group discuss BS Road maintenance. One issue identified is that maintenance makes access easy; keeping roads rough will limit use.

A member of the public commented on a statement heard concerning 75,000 acres of Wilderness slated for horseback riding. Most horseback riders cannot get their trailers down the access road to the trailhead.

BLM UPDATE

Greg reported on BLM issues. There is no word yet, from the Washington Office, on the request for a planning time extension.

The BLM and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources formally agreed to work as cooperating agencies on the CCNCA Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. The framework for cooperation will be drafted within 60 days of the August 2, 2002, signing date.

Tribal consultations with the Ute Indian Tribe have been formally initiated. The Colorado National Monument and the CCNCA are conducting consultation sessions together. Tribal issues largely relate to interpretation of cultural sites.

Greg is working on the Dinosaur Diamond, a 500-mile National Scenic Byway. The byway is newly designated and is being developed in coordination with Dinosaur National Monument; Grand Junction and Fruita, Colorado; and Vernal, Price, and Moab, Utah.

The Class I cultural survey is being funded. Other cultural issues include paleontological protection, and surveys of historic buildings, cabins, and homesteads, and their recordation of histories. The Museum of Western Colorado should be able to provide assistance with this.

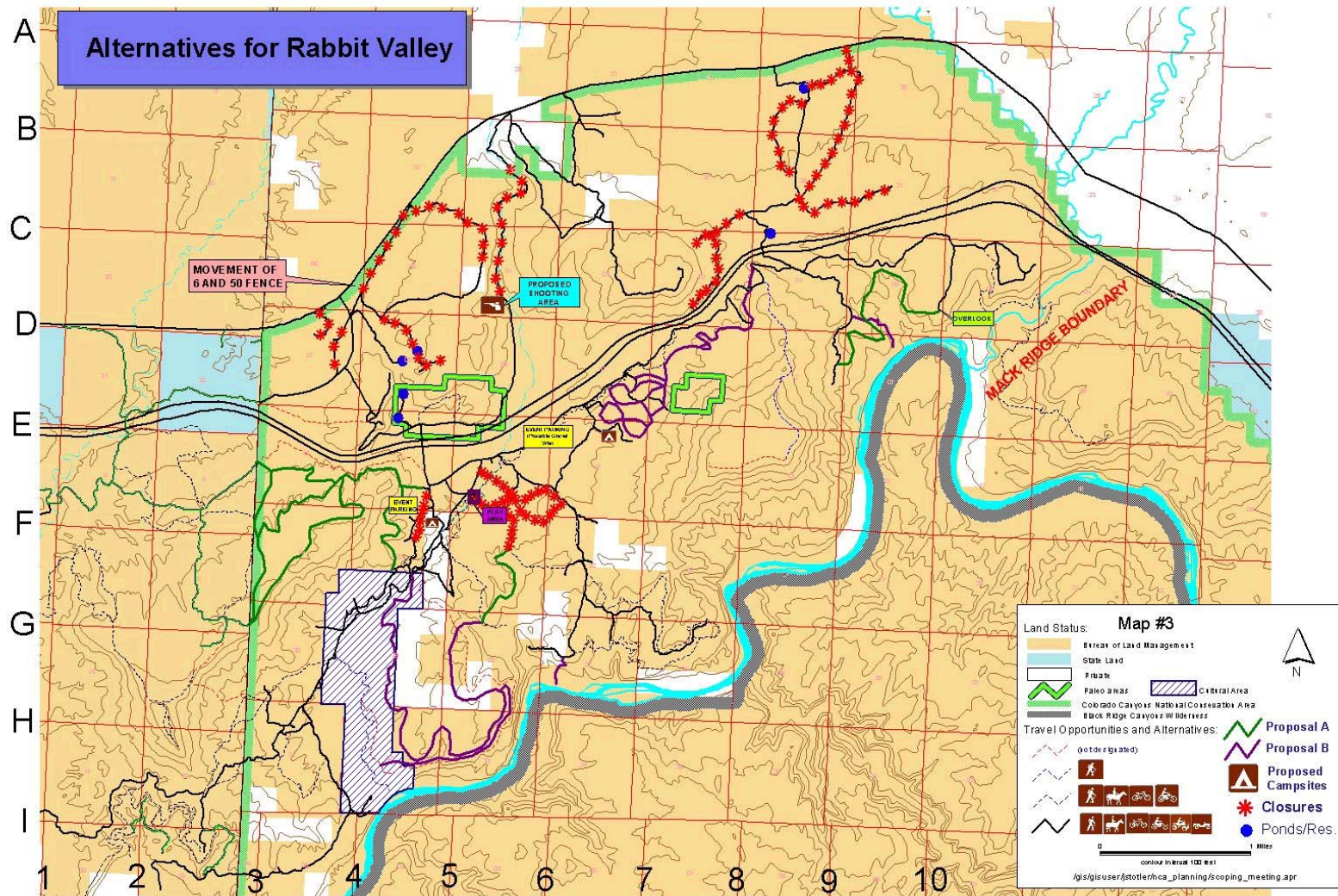
Land exchanges are still being pursued. It was determined that the state land located adjacent to the NCA near Rabbit Valley, and desired for possible acquisition, was acquired by the state as part of the Grand Basin Salinity Project—acquisition is thought to be quite likely to occur. Private land acquisition could take five years.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lovell Sasser, a member of both the Mack Ridge and Rabbit Valley Working Groups, requested Advisory Council presence at the Mack Ridge Working Group meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area Rabbit Valley Alternative Trails



Note to Map User: No warranty is made by the BLM as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregation with other data.